The RID Tool—Dealing With Triggers

The RID Tool

The RID Tool is a 3-step skill you can use when triggered to help "RID" yourself of problems coping with triggers:

Step 1: Relax

Step 2: Identify the trigger Step 3: Decide your response

Step 1: Relax

When you've been triggered, do something to help you relax right away. Here are some helpful options:

- Tell yourself something calming like "I'm safe" and "I'm going to be okay." Or you can tell yourself to "stay calm" or "relax."
- Remind yourself that the trauma occurred in the past and isn't happening now. Tell yourself, "That was then, this is now."
- Take a few deep breaths or use other relaxation exercises.
- Get centered (for example, get a drink of water, go to the bathroom, splash some water on your face, etc.).
- Remind yourself that getting triggered is a common experience for many people who have experienced trauma. It doesn't mean there's anything wrong with you.

Step 2: Identify the trigger

Figuring out exactly what caused your reaction, and figuring out how **now** is different from *then*, can help you think clearly about why the trigger affected you. And, it will help you avoid being triggered in the future.

- After relaxing and calming yourself, think back over the last few minutes and figure out what got you unsettled.
- If you can, look at your **Personalized Trigger List** and see if you've accidentally walked into one of your triggers. If you don't have the list available, you can think about the common triggers that affect you.
- Once you have identified the trigger, take a moment to recognize how it differs from what it reminds you about. Ask yourself, "How is this situation different from my trauma?"
- It is important for you to see how the current trigger is different from the trauma because it will help you to realize that you are not in danger right now—your mind and body are reacting to the original trauma, not to the present situation. Doing this will help you more quickly regain your sense of control and safety.
- Sometimes it's not possible to pinpoint what exactly has triggered you. If this happens, don't worry; just continue working to relax and calm yourself.



Trauma Triggers and Memories—Overview

Step 3: Decide your response

In order to strengthen your sense of control over the situation and your reactions, it's helpful for you to actively decide what to do next. The idea is to consciously **choose** how you want to respond to the trigger, instead of just going on "auto pilot" and letting triggers control you.

Option 1: Cope with the trigger.

If you are experiencing fear, you can retrain your brain by staying in the presence of the trigger until you are gradually less upset.

- Bring your attention back to what you were doing before you were triggered.
- Focus your attention on what you are doing, and the sights and sounds around you.
- Seek support from someone you trust.
- Find a positive distraction. For example, going for a walk, exercising, doing something healthy and fun.
- Actively talk yourself through the situation. Repeat to yourself that:
 - I'm okay and safe in this situation.
 - My trauma happened in the past—this situation is different.
 - My thoughts and emotions are normal and cannot harm me.
 - These feelings won't last forever.
 - I can tolerate these feelings, and they will gradually become less powerful.

Option 2: Take a time out.

If you are very angry, it may be best for you to walk away from the situation and continue working on the **Relax** skill for the moment. That way, you won't do anything that you will later regret. When you're feeling calmer, think through the situation and how it was different from your trauma so that next time you can stay in the presence of the trigger.



RID TOOL

Step 1: Relax

Step 2: Identify the trigger

Step 3: **D**ecide your response